

TESTIMONY OF Laura E. Johnson
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Interagency Committee (IAC) and Salmon Recovery Funding Board
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE AND FISHERIES
OF THE
SENATE COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
Tuesday, May 14, 2002

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify regarding the Pacific Salmon Recovery Act, S.1825. I am Laura Johnson, Executive Director for the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and its office, the affiliated agency known as the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC). I will comment briefly on Washington's actions to help restore wild salmon by building community support for strategic restoration investments.

Fifteen runs of wild salmon have been federally listed as threatened or endangered across 75 percent of Washington State's land base – where 90 percent of our population lives. The magnitude and geographic extent of the listings pose a significant policy challenge – how can we most effectively restore the vitality of the salmon resources in a state that now has almost 6 million residents.

Washington's Governor and the state Legislature have responded with a framework for Washington citizens to address salmon recovery. The Congress has also offered its assistance in addressing the challenge posed by the federal listings.

My remarks will highlight the state's 1999 enactment of the "Salmon Recovery Act", Ch. 77.85, Revised Code of Washington. The Act established two key elements of the state's recovery framework – the Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board ("SRFB"), and its associated local watershed partners, called "lead entities." Because the Salmon Recovery Funding Board's work is directly related to proposed S. 1825, I will also comment on the interaction of the federal measure and our existing state processes.

Overview of Washington's Recovery Initiatives

Before I offer a more detailed explanation of the SRFB process, let me also point out a few of the other related salmon recovery processes underway in Washington State:

- The Governor's Salmon Recovery Office coordinates the state's overall recovery strategy, as set out in the *Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon: Extinction is Not an Option* (September 1999). The Office also leads the Cabinet of natural-resource agency directors as they ensure interagency coordination, accountability of programs, and leadership.
- The Independent Science Panel, established by the state legislature and appointed by the Governor based on recommendations from the American Fisheries Society, is tasked with providing high-level advice on monitoring, data and recovery activities.

- The Forests and Fish Agreement, a voluntary pact negotiated by forest landowners, covers 8 million acres of forestland and 60,000 miles of streams.
- Hatchery management changes are underway to help ensure hatchery and wild fish do not compete, and harvest practices have also been modified.
- The Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy is a project requested by the Governor and SRFB, and enacted by the 2001 Legislature. It will develop a comprehensive monitoring strategy and action plan to guide our management and accountability tools – that is, where and how we measure our fish and watersheds.

Attachment A provides a more detailed review of current recovery initiatives.

Watershed Habitats – The Role of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board

“If we are going to be successful in recovering salmon habitat it will be based on the energy and commitment of local people supported by good science. The legislative wisdom of creating a citizen-based, science-informed process is starting to pay off in real results. I am confident it will return even more significant benefits in the future.” William D. Ruckelshaus, Chairman, Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board

State policymakers and others understood that for wild salmon recovery to be successful, Washington would have to address the loss of spawning and rearing habitat in our watersheds. In 1999, the Washington Legislature provided for the habitat element of recovery by enacting the Salmon Recovery Act, Ch. 77.85 RCW. The Act established the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), and created so-called "lead entities" - or local citizen groups - to promote and coordinate salmon recovery activities in their communities and watersheds.

Salmon Recovery Funding Board Composition

The funding board is comprised of 10 members - five citizens appointed by the Governor and five directors from state natural resource agencies. A wide range of interests and expertise are represented. Current Board members are:

- William D. Ruckelshaus, *Seattle* Chairman of the Board
- Frank L. “Larry” Cassidy, Jr., *Vancouver* (Chairman, NW Power Planning Council)
- Brenda McMurray, *Yakima* (Watershed & Environmental Issues)
- James Peters, *Olympia* (Natural Resources Director, Squaxin Tribe)
- Steve Tharinger, *Port Angeles* (County Commissioner, Clallam County)
- Conservation Commission, Steven P. Meyer, Executive Director
- Department of Ecology, Tom Fitzsimmons, Director
- Department of Fish & Wildlife, Jeffrey Koenings, Director
- Department of Natural Resources, Doug Sutherland, Commissioner
- Department of Transportation, Douglas B. MacDonald, Secretary

The Board meets approximately monthly at locations around the state. All meetings are open to the public, and participation is encouraged. The administrative office of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board is with the Interagency Committee for Outdoor

Recreation (IAC), which ensures compliance with grant agreements as well as performing policy development and other duties.

Lead Entities – Local Restoration Partners

The 1999 Salmon Recovery Act also created the local framework for restoration work, through a system of “lead entities.” As of May 2002, the state has 26 lead entities, operating in all salmon-bearing watersheds.

The lead entities are organizations of local or regional scale, convened by cities, counties, tribes, and including nonprofits and other interested parties in the area. The lead entities create inclusive citizen-based committees to solicit and prioritize local habitat project lists. They are responsible for using limiting factor analysis and other watershed assessment tools to identify and scientifically review projects that benefit salmon habitat within local watersheds. The lead entities must also work with local Technical Assistance Groups (TAGs) to include local scientific knowledge.

Selecting Restoration Projects and Efforts

Once a lead entity has developed its local prioritized list, proposals on that list are submitted to the SRFB for possible funding. The Board’s primary responsibility is to help fund the best salmon habitat projects and activities.

To provide an independent statewide review of the proposals’ science and technical merit, the SRFB has established a Technical Panel comprised of distinguished scientists and recovery experts. The Technical Panel applies its expertise and uses published criteria. Proposals are reviewed for their *Benefit to Fish* as well as the *Certainty of Success* that those benefits can be attained. The Technical Panel also reviews the lead entity’s salmon recovery plans, and assesses how the proposed portfolio of projects supports the locally-identified strategic directions for salmon recovery. The Panel’s final recommendations are provided to the SRFB.

Public Participation and Accountability

From its inception, the SRFB has insisted that its own processes for review, project selection and program administration be as transparent and accountable as possible. All meetings are open to the public, decisions are made on published criteria, and the Board has actively encouraged public participation by meeting throughout the state and by seeking advice (even critiques) on how to improve its work. Fund administration is rigorous, based on contracts for defined grant deliverables, “milestones” to track progress, and requirements for site monitoring. IAC manages the grants with a state-of-the-art computer system available through the Internet. IAC also contracts with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to provide permitting assistance for needed environmental reviews, so grant funds can be implemented on-the-ground as swiftly as possible.

In summary, Washington’s system is premised on engaging and encouraging local citizens to make informed salmon habitat decisions. By offering incentives to the watersheds – primarily financial and technical assistance – and by establishing a structure for the

watersheds to identify and support the best local projects, Washington's habitat recovery can achieve the support of those who live in the watersheds.

~ Project Review & Selection Process ~

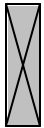
WA SALMON RECOVERY FUNDING BOARD (SRFB)

- Citizen chair (Gov. appointed)
- 4 additional citizens (Gov. appointed)
- Agencies: WDFW, CC, DOT, DNR, WDOE

Sets project eligibility, evaluation criteria and process

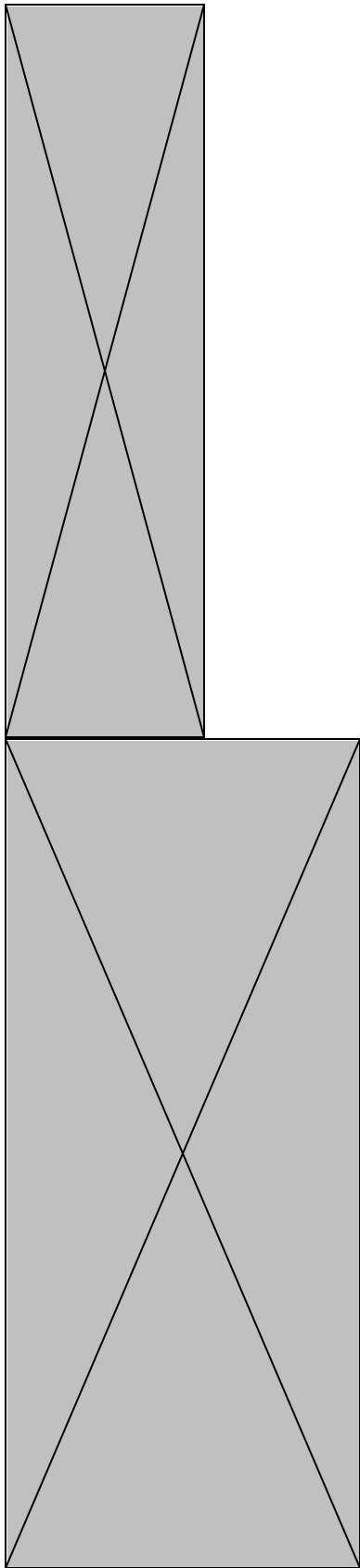
Appoints Technical Panel

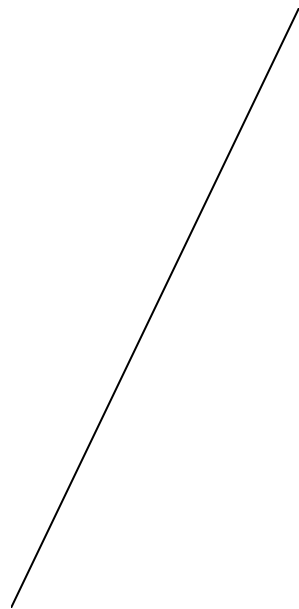
Awards grants in open public meeting sessions \$\$\$\$



SRFB Technical Panel **(8-10 scientists*)**

- *Reviews projects and strategies*
- *Makes recommendations on process, criteria, and allocations*
- *Main Criteria:*
“Benefit to Salmon” and “Certainty of Success”





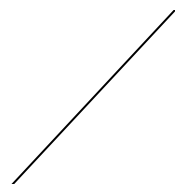
Ranked lists of projects

Local LEAD ENTITY

(26 Statewide; Watershed Areas or larger,
diverse community representation)

Citizen Committee, and Technical Advisory Committee

- *Develop strategies*
- *Evaluate projects, rank lists*



Project proposals

Project Sponsors

- Cities, counties and state agencies *Limiting factors analysis and other*
 - Non-profits & RFEGs *assessments,*
 - Tribes *analyses and*
 - Private landowners *inventories*
-

** 2001-02 SRFB Technical Panel Members: Dr. B. Allee, Fisheries biology, CBF&WA (now at NWPPC); Dr. T. Beechie, Ecology / fisheries/ forestry, NMFS Seattle; Dr. P. DeVries, Fisheries / hydrology, private consultant; Dr. B. Feist, Fish ecology, NMFS; Dr. C. Smith – Zoology and Fish Biology, WA Conservation Commission; J. Smith, MS, Fisheries, Pacific Watershed Institute; K. Terrell, Aquatic habitat restoration, USF&WS; Dr. S. Toth, Hydrologist, private consulting practice.*

Types of Projects Selected – A Competitive Process

Restoration activities such as in-stream fish passage improvements or riparian habitat restoration are eligible for SRFB funding, as are habitat site acquisitions (in fee or by conservation easement), and assessments and studies designed to identify or improve restoration projects' feasibility. By law and Board policy, all proposals must be voluntarily submitted by the sponsor. Except under limited circumstances, funding cannot supplant existing resources and may not support actions otherwise required by law or regulation.

The Board's process has proven to be popular, and highly competitive. Since 1999, the Board has held three full "Grant Rounds" (yearly Calls-for-Proposals), as well as assuming administration of earlier grants awarded under SRFB predecessors. In the three SRFB grant rounds, the lead entities submitted requests for 713 proposals, seeking \$152.7 million in assistance. The Board reviewed all the proposals, and, since 2000, has awarded grants for just under \$82 million to 359 proposals.

SRFB grants must have at least a 15% match from the project sponsor. The match can be from the sponsor's local financial resources (such as local stream restoration funds). SRFB also allows and encourages match by in-kind methods such as contribution of volunteer time, labor, professional consulting expertise, or materials. In practice, SRFB has found that sponsors often bring far more than the minimum 15% match to the grant.

Funding Salmon Habitat Restoration Efforts

Both the Washington State Legislature and the Congress have provided significant funds

to the SRFB to support salmon recovery projects and activities:

State Funds, July 1999 – June 2003 Biennial Appropriations:

\$ 64.9 million

Federal Funds, Fiscal 99 to 02:

\$101.4 million

Approximately \$23 million of the federal funds to SRFB were subject to congressional marks to programs such as Forests and Fish implementation and Fish Mass Marking. \$78 million of Federal funds were at SRFB disposal for local salmon recovery grants.

The federal funds for grants are administered by SRFB using the competitive review process described above. A formal Memorandum of Understanding is in place between the SRFB and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Reports are provided to the Governor and State Legislature on a biennial basis, and to the NMFS on an annual basis. A copy of our recent report on the Pacific Coastal Salmon funds is enclosed, Attachment B. (Electronic version of attachment does not include detailed project lists which will be provided to the Committee in paper format.)

S. 1825 - Relation to Washington's Salmon Recovery Funding Process

The support Congress has given to Washington's recovery efforts has been vital, and is deeply appreciated. Whether that support is expressed in an appropriations measure or by legislation such as S.1825, Washington will work towards salmon recovery using state and federal funds in the manner described above.

Most of the elements and criteria expressed in S.1825 are already in place in the Washington State system, and are important criteria for recovery funding, including:

- Accountability
- Transparency of process; opportunities for public participation
- Application of science
- Strategic focus on benefits to fish

However, Washington is concerned that the detailed requirements of S.1825 will pose challenges to Washington's established processes. Because S.1825 adds plans and an additional (third) layer of review to processes already being carried out, it will create delay and cost to our recovery participants. It is also not clear to us that the specific federal processes outlined in the measure will add accountability or criteria beyond that already included in the state's system. Washington therefore encourages the Committee to consider modifying the measure to avoid unnecessary duplication of plans and accountability measures.

For example, in respect to the Peer Review process outlined in Sec. 4, the states should be able to use the outlined process or an alternative process, for those states where peer review is already mandated and in use under state rules (with NMFS review and concurrence through the Memorandum of Understanding process, of course.) Likewise, Sec. 3 expresses legitimate goals for planning and reporting. However, we believe existing Washington methods in this regard already address the bill's criteria, and would support modification of the bill to allow existing state processes as an alternative to accomplish the desired result. Finally, because Washington has been able to contribute significant state funds to its recovery effort, any funding formula and processes should not operate as a disincentive to state policy and financial commitments. We will be pleased to work with the Committee and the other states to offer specific draft text in these regards, should the Committee so desire.

CONCLUSION

Salmon recovery will continue to be a huge challenge for Washington State. SRFB Chairman Ruckelshaus has outlined where Washington now stands and our progress to date, Attachment C. Many of the key steps for the recovery of the salmon are in place. Through institutions such as the Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board, credible public investments of state and federal funds assist our citizens in designing their own sustainable strategies for salmon resources. We deeply appreciate the efforts and enthusiasm of the thousands of Washington citizens now engaged in this work. On the federal level, we thank you for your efforts and support as well.